



## Welcome to your newsletter

We live in changing times and in this issue of Eric F Box News the focus is on how new technology is set to alter treatment of the deceased.

The area of post mortems is a very subjective one. Our view is that changes to time-honoured practices should only be granted once there is complete confidence in the alternatives available.

We would be delighted to hear your views on this and any other subjects of interest.

There is never too much time passes before we hear about yet another review of the funeral industry.

On the whole most of us welcome such scrutiny as it helps to uncover those practitioners who do the industry no favours at all.

But as with any survey we take the findings with a large pinch of salt! The Which? report provides a tiny snapshot of what is happening and until there is a comprehensive review of the industry by the industry we should not read too much into the headlines.

Oh, and we must not forget, well done to Alan and Becky for passing their foundation certificate in Funeral Directing!

Enjoy the start of summer – and let's hope we get one this year!



In the event of a death at any time of the day or night, contact us at:

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## Funerals in the spotlight



A survey by consumer champion Which? highlights areas of concern for the funeral industry.

The report follows a study of funeral directors across the country that uncovered examples of poor advice and unclear pricing.

In trips to 20 firms, researchers also found some businesses were perceived as independent operators – when in fact they were part of chains – a constant

problem, says Edward Box.

“Transparency of ownership is a problem,” said Edward. “The vast majority of family businesses are family owned, but there are those that do not make it clear who the owner is.

“It is unlikely to change as the big players in the industry have all the power and will not want to alter the status quo. It is in their interests to appear to be local and independent

– it is the reason they buy the businesses in the first place.”

The Which? survey also discovered differences in prices, with independents providing the cheapest quotes.

These findings are totally understandable, added Edward. “The independents charge just enough to cover their overheads, while the big companies are run by accountants and need to achieve a certain level of profit.

“At Eric F Box our prices reflect the quality service we provide and have been doing for 160 years.”

Edward was quick to defend his colleagues in the industry from the negative publicity generated by such reports.

He went on: “A lot of funeral providers go over and above in providing a sound, honest service. Of course there is always bad practice, as there is in all walks of life, but there are a lot of genuine people giving good advice and value.”

## Computer post mortems move a step closer

Using imaging techniques to replace traditional post mortems is increasingly under the spotlight.

Improvements in technology may soon allow coroners to choose non-invasive imaging to identify cause of death and avoid objections to PMs on faith grounds, or cultural or personal beliefs.

But it is an area where we must tread extremely carefully, believes Richard Box.

He said: “The technology has to be at a stage where it gives a cause of death that is 100 per cent correct 100 per cent of the time. A post mortem does that.

“Imaging of some sort is no doubt less traumatic for the family of the deceased, but we have to be at a point where it is completely

reliable. The need for absolute accuracy is, in reality, greater than the need to reduce family trauma, however, desirable this may be.”

A study by The Lancet into the accuracy of post-mortem CT and MRI imaging, compared with a full PM, was made into a large

number of adult deaths.

Its findings included that common causes of sudden death were frequently missed on CT and MRI and that improvements were needed to maintain accurate mortality statistics if imaging were to replace conventional PMs.



Could computer technology soon replace traditional post mortems?



# Titanic Remembers Its Only Child Victim



It has been difficult in recent weeks, to go anywhere without seeing or hearing something about the doomed RMS Titanic, which sank in the North Atlantic Ocean on 15th April 1912.

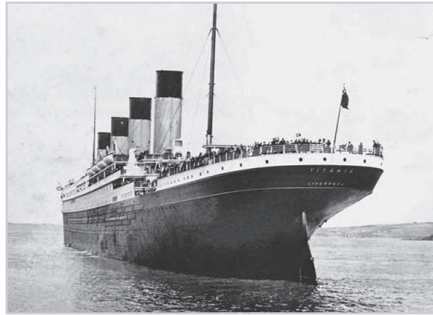
However, whilst 1517 of the 2223 passengers onboard perished, perhaps one of the most poignant stories is that of one year old Sidney Leslie Goodwin, the only child among the recovered dead, who boarded the ocean liner with his parents, Frederick and Augusta, and five siblings.

The entire family was lost in the sinking, and fair haired Sidney, who was born on 9th September 1910, was one of the first bodies recovered by the crew of the cable ship Mackay-Bennett.

The sailors involved in the expedition were so moved that when no relative came forward to claim the child, they personally escorted his coffin to Fairview Lawn

Cemetery in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and paid for a large monument in memory of the "unknown child". His was the only burial service that day - 4 May 1912.

In 2002 the body was positively identified as Eino Viljami Panula by means of DNA technology, however in 2007, researchers revised their opinion and stated that the body was in fact that of Sidney Leslie Goodwin from Melksham in Wiltshire, England.



On the day of the funeral the local newspaper reported: The little boy, darling of some mothers heart, was given a separate funeral at 11 o'clock this morning from St. Georges church. It need not be said that it was a profoundly moving service. The sturdy seamen who were the "chiefmourners", showed in their honest faces how deeply they felt the pathos of this burial, and there were few dry eyes in the church.



RMS Titanic was a British passenger liner that sank in the North Atlantic Ocean on 15 April 1912 after colliding with an iceberg during its maiden voyage from Southampton, England to New York City. It was one of the deadliest peacetime maritime disasters in history.

# Burials Through Time... THE ANCIENT GREEKS

By the sixth century B.C. the ancient Greeks had an established view of the afterlife and ceremonies associated with burial.

They believed that at the moment of death what was known as the psyche, or spirit of the dead, left the body as a breath or puff of wind. At this point the deceased was prepared for a ritual burial.

There was the necessity for a proper burial and Greeks viewed the omission of burial rites as an insult to human dignity.

Relatives, primarily women, carried out elaborate burial rituals that consisted of three parts: the prothesis, or laying out of the body, the ekphora, a funeral procession and the interment of the body or cremated remains of the deceased.

The body was washed and anointed with oil, dressed and placed on a bed within the house. Relatives and friends came to mourn and pay their respects.

Following the prothesis, the deceased was brought to the cemetery in a procession that usually took place just before dawn.

The Greeks placed very few objects in the grave. However, monumental earth mounds, tombs and elaborate statues were often erected to mark the grave and to ensure that the deceased would not be forgotten. Immortality came from the continued remembrance of the dead by the living.

Surviving art works show that the women of Classical Athens made regular visits to graves with offerings of small cakes drinks.

Information courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art



# INDUSTRY FOCUS: Hospital waiting times under scrutiny

Eric. F. Box is supporting moves within the industry for a national policy on the release of loved ones from hospital.

Funeral directors seeking to bring those who have passed away out of hospital, and into their care, are finding the process increasingly frustrating because of NHS red tape.

Over the last few months some NHS Trusts have insisted on seeing a registrar certificate for burial or cremation, which a family obtains when they register a death, before releasing loved ones into the care of the funeral director.

Now the National Association of Funeral Directors is asking the Government to introduce a common approach by all NHS Trusts.

"This is well overdue," said Andrew Box. "It is a major problem in the big cities, where the number of deaths mean it can take a full week to register a death, and for a funeral director to get

loves ones from hospital. This may not only cause delays with the funeral, but also creates further upset for families. A national policy is urgently needed."

**The NAFD has now joined a government working party to tackle the problem.**



# DUG BROTHERS - FUNERAL DIRECTORS

